

NATO and the SOVIET SCARE

**Exaggerated fears of Soviet
military forces in Europe can
only lead to a costly and dangerous
U.S. build-up.**

By FRED KAPLAN

WITH VIETNAM OUT of the way, Europe is once again the focus of United States foreign and defense policy. Much of the new concern over NATO derives from perceptions of a growing Soviet military threat in Europe. Senators Sam Nunn and Dewey Bartlett, in an influential January 1977 report to the Senate Armed Services Committee, state bluntly that the Warsaw Pact is "rapidly moving toward a decisive conventional military superiority" over NATO. They claim that the Pact forces could launch a "devastating

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invasion of Europe with . . . a few days' warning," and sweep through defending forces, conquering much of Western Europe before the United States could deploy effective reinforcements from North America. To counter this threat, Nunn and Bartlett urge a crash military build-up which would make it possible to reinforce NATO fully within two or three days of a warning of Soviet attack.

This general alarm echoes, though less shrilly, through the statements and programs of the Carter administration. "While there is work ahead of us, there are no grounds for panic or crash efforts," wrote Secretary of Defense Harold Brown in his annual report this January. Still, the "work ahead of us" is considerable and costly. About \$60 billion of Brown's \$126 billion defense budget is NATO-related. Included in this budget are requests for funds to develop or procure several major new weapons systems for NATO; if Congress approves these requests, American spending for Europe is certain to rise still higher and faster in the coming years.

From a strictly military perspective, some of this alarm about Soviet power in Europe is warranted: While the U.S. military was bogged down in Vietnam—diverting material, weapons, and manpower from Europe to the Southeast Asian quagmire—the Soviets were just beginning to modernize their ground and tactical air forces. Since the demise in October 1964 of Nikita Khrushchev, an advocate of defense through "cheap nuclear deterrence," the Warsaw Pact has become a far more formidable military opponent. It has doubled the number of its artillery launching tubes, added 25 percent more aircraft to air units, put an extra motorized-rifle division in each tank army, and increased the manpower of divisions from one-fifth to one-third.

But what is the significance of this build-up? How does it affect the current balance of forces in Europe? How prepared is each side—politically and militarily—for initiating and sustaining war? In short, can NATO, now and in the foreseeable future, defend itself?

In attempting to answer these questions, many journalistic and official reports merely count and compare the number of soldiers, divisions, tanks, planes, and ships on each side. Yet these statistics alone clearly do not help us calculate whether a war will break out, or who will win it, which is, after all, why we study such statistics in the first place. Instead, what we need to do

is determine how these raw numbers convert into usable military power. Only this kind of assessment will yield us a true picture of the military balance in Europe.

For instance, it is often noted that the Soviet military has 4.4 million men, compared with the U.S. military's 2.1 million. Yet more than half of Soviet forces engage in activities unrelated to American foreign-policy interests: construction work, internal security, defense of the long Chinese border. When we measure the forces that could be brought to bear in a conflict, the Soviet

weapons. Says Representative Les Aspin (D.-Wisc.) about the non-Soviet Category I forces: "If a U.S. division were manned at that level, it would be given the lowest rating of C-4, which means not ready." And of the 86 Warsaw Pact divisions in the Central Region of Europe, only 30 are as much as 75 percent ready.

Pact divisions are also structured differently from NATO's. Even when fully manned and equipped, they have from one-third to one-half the manpower, fewer weapons, and far less firepower than their NATO counterparts.

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and U.S. military stand virtually equal. And if we compare all active forces of NATO (including the United States) and the Warsaw Pact (including the USSR), the score is also about equal, at roughly 4.8 million each. In ground forces alone, NATO outnumbered the Pact, 2.8 to 2.6 million.

Several analysts look at the number of divisions on each side as an indicator of comparative strength. At first glance, the picture looks gloomy for the West: 226 divisions for the Pact, 41 for NATO. This first glance, however, is misleading. Of the 168 Soviet divisions in this total, 61 are deployed in the Far East for possible war with China. (Indeed, over the past decade the big leap in Soviet forces, an increase of 48 divisions, has occurred in the Far East. The only other new divisions deployed in this time span have been the five sent into Czechoslovakia in 1968, and they have never been pulled out.)

Still, that leaves 86 Soviet and 31 non-Soviet Pact divisions, and that seems like a lot. However, other factors must be considered. Soviet and Pact divisions are placed in three categories: Soviet Category I divisions are 75 to 95 percent fully manned. Soviet Category II (and non-Soviet Pact Category I) divisions are 50 to 75 percent combat-ready; they lack some armored personnel carriers, and many of their trucks would have to be taken from the civilian economy. Soviet Category III (and non-Soviet Category II) divisions are only 25 to 50 percent ready; their reinforcement troops are untrained, they have old equipment, and lack many

On M-Day—the first day of pre-attack mobilization—the ratio of Warsaw Pact to NATO forces would be 1.96:1 in divisions, but only 1.08:1 in ground forces manpower and 1:1 in firepower potential. Since a successful offensive requires decisive superiority of forces, there seems good reason to doubt the pessimistic scenario of Senators Nunn and Bartlett.

Other numerical comparisons are also misleading. For example, in the Central Region of Europe, where the opening salvos of a future European war are likely to be fired, the Pact could mobilize 20,000 tanks against NATO's 7000. Yet on the battlefield, tanks are hit not only by other tanks, but also by antitank guns and missiles. On this score, NATO is substantially superior to the Pact. Modern U.S. antitank weapons have a high chance of knocking out modern Soviet tanks with a single shot from 3.5 kilometers or more, while Pact tank cannons have ranges of about 2 kilometers. U.S. infantry antitank weapons can penetrate up to 20 inches of armor from their maximum lethal ranges, whereas Pact tank armor is only about nine inches thick. The intrinsic advantage that antitank weapons have over tanks—e.g., the defense can hide, while the offense must expose itself maneuvering—amplifies NATO's antitank superiority.

Furthermore, Pact tanks are, by and large, qualitatively inferior to NATO tanks. Most of them are lighter, have shorter ranges, smaller ammunition loads, less accurate guns, and thinner armor. The crew space in Soviet tanks is

very cramped. The widely deployed T-62 tank can travel, on the average, only 100–125 miles before breaking down. Even if a T-62 were to start out at the westernmost military base in East Germany, it probably could not reach any major economic center in West Germany without breaking down. And recovery-repair facilities of the Soviet army's technical support and logistics crews are neither extensive nor designed for heavily damaged vehicles. By comparison, NATO tanks tend to break down after 150–200 miles of use; and NATO does not plan on maneuvering tanks over vast stretches of territory.

In its air forces, the Pact has about 5300 tactical combat planes in Europe, against NATO's 2900. But more Soviet and Pact aircraft are designed exclusively for air-defense missions than are NATO's. NATO aircraft far exceed the Pact's in payload, range, air-to-air fighting capability, maneuverability, munitions-delivery accuracy, crew effectiveness and training, command-control flexibility, and deep-strike interdiction capability. NATO would have little difficulty in carrying out its prime missions of air superiority, air interdiction, and close-air ground-attack support.

The Soviets have a larger navy than the United States, with an estimated 450 combat surface vessels and attack submarines, against America's 250. However, the Soviet navy includes many light escort fleets, while the U.S. Navy has three times the tonnage of the Soviet fleet. The United States also has

Pact which, while *numerically* superior to NATO, is not *decisively* superior in military power and is, in fact, markedly inferior in quality and scope of mission.

BUT THERE IS MORE TO warfare than mass. There is also training, tactics and strategy, command and control, and logistics and reinforcement. While these issues are more complicated and subject to dispute, it appears that NATO is adequate or excels in these areas as well.

There is no more illuminating evidence about the state of Soviet training than an article in the Soviet journal *Military Herald* by Soviet General of the Army I. G. Pavlocky: "... it would be an unforgivable mistake to keep silent about the deficiencies in combat training. . . . Commanders and officers . . . have still not learned to firmly control the actions of subordinates in battle, to maneuver with them, and [in exercises] have not always correctly used armored transporters and combat machines of the infantry in breaking through a prepared defense. . . . [There has also been] poorly organized cooperation of means of fire suppression and . . . [lack of] energetic measures to destroy antitank missiles and . . . guns."

These deficiencies are all the more remarkable when we consider the fact that Pact military maneuvers are notorious in U.S. intelligence circles for their rigidity, their misjudgments of NATO's power and effectiveness, and, in the words of one State Department mil-

blocks. Even the Ground Soviet Forces in Germany, the cream of Soviet forces, uses only one-third of its assigned equipment, and some of its combat units are not even allowed to train with tanks.

Furthermore, the Pact is hardly a war-ready force. Conscripts are trained within their divisions, on the field, during their two years of mandatory military service. Every six months, 60,000 troops are moved in and the same number moved out. That is to say, at any given point, almost one-quarter of the Soviet forces in Eastern Europe are undertrained—if trained at all—for combat. Training time in recent years has been cut from three years to two; the time for some programs has been cut in half.

The operational tactics of Soviet military doctrine worry many Western analysts. Soviet doctrine states that, however a war may begin (and it is always phrased, "if the imperialists unleash one"), the initiative must be taken as swiftly as possible. The heavily armored force structure of the Pact armies supports this doctrine (although, as the Soviets demonstrated in the early stages of World War II, tanks can be used for deep-defense and counteroffense, too). Once the offensive is taken, however, high speed, maneuvering, and deep-penetration are the rule. Tanks are to be used for piercing through defenses, while continuous barrages of artillery fire saturate enemy forces. Tanks are to be followed by armored personnel carriers, followed by antitank weapons, followed by anti-aircraft weapons.

Heavy reliance on the tank as the main striking force is one of the lessons the Soviets learned from World War II. Although some Soviet officers have written a good deal lately about tank vulnerability, their planned mode of military operations is still rooted in 1941–1945. Command and control of troops is heavily centralized at the top. In exercises, everything is done "by the book." If something in a war were not to go according to plans, there would be little that officers in the field could do about it. When things went slightly wrong in the 1968 Czechoslovakia invasion—with no military opposition at all—Soviet tanks and armored personnel carriers blithely poured into narrow bottlenecks, causing, as Les Aspin has noted, "rush-hour traffic jams that would have provided tempting targets in a real war."

A fundamental prerequisite for waging successful conventional war—

Pact military maneuvers are notorious for rigidity and "ludicrous staginess"

better naval aircraft (the Soviets have hardly any air support for naval missions), better sonars for antisubmarine warfare, and more creative and aggressive tactics. The U.S. Navy can fulfill a wide variety of missions with great flexibility, while the Soviets, hampered by inferior technology and constricting geography (and a lack of foreign bases), is largely a "fortress fleet" that is developing increasing sea-denial capability, but very little amphibious-assault and no power-projection capacity.

In short, a close look at simple quantitative indicators reveals a Warsaw

itary expert, their "ludicrous staginess." Unlike NATO training, which allows for tactical flexibility, Pact exercises neglect the "free-wheeling maneuver." Initiative on all levels below top command is explicitly discouraged.

Pact forces use the same equipment over and over in exercises until it breaks down. NATO trains with the actual equipment that would be used in a war. The Pact's method is cheaper, but it gives the troops little experience with their real weapons. In general, the Pact uses only 20 percent of its actual equipment in field training; the rest is kept in warehouses, much of it on concrete

especially a successful deep-penetration, highly mobile offensive—is the establishment and maintenance of an adequate logistics infrastructure, including a supply base and transportation network. Yet, as John Erickson, Britain's leading expert on the Soviet military, has commented, "logistics have always been one of the weakest parts of the Soviet system." In the 1968 Czechoslovakia intervention, the Soviets outran their supply lines upon crossing the border. Some units went without fuel or hot food for days. Before the attack, the Soviets had to commandeer civilian trucks from throughout European Russia. The resulting shortage of civilian trucks contributed greatly to that year's harvest failure and manufacturing difficulties. Civilian resistance was minimal, but it was enough to prevent the Soviets from seizing Czech fuel and supplies. And this was a very limited occupation-invasion against a country half the size of West Germany, with no military resistance and with three months' preparation before the attack.

Granted, that was a decade ago. Soviet logistics have improved. The Soviets now have more heavy amphibious trucks, folding-bridge stock, and petroleum tankers. Still, several State Department military specialists maintain that none of these improvements has markedly improved the Pact's ability to sustain an attack.

Some say, however, that even with all the aforementioned inadequacies, a Warsaw Pact offensive could succeed if it caught NATO off-guard. Senators Nunn and Bartlett call this scenario a "come-as-you-are war." Indeed, Soviet doctrine stresses surprise tactics: concealment, night maneuvering during mobilization, detailed cover. Just before the 1968 Czechoslovakia invasion, large concentrations of troops moved under cover of electronic screens that impeded Western radar surveillance and kept radio traffic signals to a minimum. The intended effect was to mask Pact movements.

It seems doubtful, though, that NATO could be surprised. Former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger once testified: "The total list of potential indicators of a Soviet attack in Europe is long—several hundred items." A 1976 Pentagon report concluded: "We would almost certainly be aware of a [large] mobilization and reinforcement . . . in a matter of hours." Even during the Czechoslovakia invasion's mobilization period, the United States

and other NATO nations kept abreast of the situation at every stage. As R. Lucas Fischer noted in a highly regarded study of the NATO-Pact balance in 1976, "It is hard to see that a [covert] mobilization . . . could add much to Warsaw Pact strength without clear detection by a variety of means."

Still, many Western analysts worry that a highly concentrated Soviet attack, even if it were detected, could overwhelm NATO's conventional defenses. They suggest that if Pact forces had marginal theater-wide superiority of forces, the Soviets could deploy them

labor" among Pact forces: a single army or "front" combines, for example, Soviet motorized rifle units, Polish armor, and Czech air units. Hence, in the event of war, the noncooperation of even a single country could deprive the Pact of crucial force elements and hamper the war effort far more than mere numbers would indicate. Of course, NATO has its share of reliability problems, too, especially from the French and the Dutch. Still, if NATO were on the defensive against a Soviet invasion, it would be likely to have the political advantage. Even if some allies

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to give a 1:1 ratio along most axes of the battleline, and in a few relatively narrow sectors, could amass great superiority. At these decisive points, the analysts claim, the Soviets could break through.

Several factors would hinder the success of such an operation against NATO, however. For one, breakthrough tactics can probably be pursued with confidence only if the attack maintains substantially better than 1:1 ratios along the non-breakthrough sectors, as well; the Soviets would probably not be capable of doing so. Second, it would take a great deal of maneuvering to amass such force along a few sectors. The effort would be noisy and time-consuming, allowing for detection and much counter-preparation by NATO. The concentrated mass of forces would also strain an already feeble logistics network, which would also have to be concentrated and would, therefore, be highly vulnerable to NATO air interdiction. Third, such intensive concentration would be a very tempting and lucrative target for NATO's tactical nuclear weapons in Europe—a prospect that the Pact would surely want to avoid.

IN ADDITION TO THESE MILITARY considerations, there are political factors that make a Soviet attack less likely and, if it did occur, less effective. First, in an attack, the Soviets would have to count upon unreliable allies like Poland or Czechoslovakia. Recent Warsaw Pact exercises show a national "division of

did not participate, the United States and West Germany would not have to divert forces for occupying, say, France or the Netherlands; the Soviets have no such assurance. In short, as Jeffrey Record observed in a Brookings Institution study: "It is doubtful that . . . [Eastern European] armies would remain politically reliable in a sustained offensive operation. . . . [They] might even prove a liability."

Second, there is the broader issue of political intentions. Why would the Soviets want to take the risks involved in invading Western Europe? Certainly, they, like the Americans, would not mind spreading their influence and power. But from Lenin to Brezhnev, all Soviet leaders have dismissed the feasibility or wisdom of "Revolutionary War" as a means of spreading Communism. Such a notion, after all, is associated with that long-reviled "renegade," Leon Trotsky. And certainly, given the Soviets' problems with maintaining order in their own bloc, one cannot imagine any sizable net gains they would accrue from occupying Western Europe, with its strong democratic traditions, or from engaging the United States in a new conflict, either hot or cold, which would inevitably be the result.

None of this denies that there are some military weaknesses in NATO. These flow not from shortages of forces but from the poor deployment of these forces and lack of coordination between them. Because of the position of armies at the end of World War II, the Soviets' crack forces are located in the northern

and central regions of East Germany, while U.S. forces are deployed in the southern part of West Germany. NATO aircraft are less sheltered on airfields than Pact planes. NATO also suffers from problems in standardization and interchangeability of equipment. Logistics lines of each nation are separate. Because France is not formally a part of NATO, the lines of communication for all NATO countries run from north to south and, in some areas of West Germany, come dangerously close to the East German border. Prepositioned supply stocks have also been low, and are ex-

tration. Brown is asking this year for 18,000 more antitank guided missiles for the Army, a million more rounds of conventional artillery fire, and several types of new-generation aircraft, while NATO allies are also stepping up their defense efforts somewhat. Brown also wants to increase the amount of prepositioned equipment in Europe so that more reinforcement troops from the United States can meet up with their materials near the battle zone rather than having to rely so heavily on highly expensive, undependable cargo aircraft, such as the infamously fragile

spend nearly \$950 million over the next two years for "continued modification and procurement"). The outrageously costly F-14 is designed primarily to protect aircraft carriers; since carriers are growing obsolete, the F-14 is superfluous. The F-15, a program whose cost-overruns and overloaded technological "extras" are also growing out of hand, should simply be halted; four wings (288 planes) have already been deployed for NATO missions, and that is probably enough, if mixed with other planes.

The F-16 is a useful, multi-purpose plane to replace the aging and limited F-4 fighter. The A-10, aside from displaying some technical problems with its engine which should be remedied, is a flexible airborne tank-killer that is hard to shoot down. Still, it is highly questionable whether so many of these planes are actually needed for the security of Europe, especially since the Air Force continues to modify, rather than junk or sell, existing aircraft.

Much money could be saved if extravagant claims about the Soviet military threat were toned down to more realistic levels. A recent report by former Assistant Secretary of Defense Townsend Hoopes and former CIA Deputy Director Herbert Scoville, published by the Council on National Priorities and Resources, estimates—correctly, I think—that more than \$30 billion (in constant 1978 dollars) could be cut over the next four years from the planned budgets for non-nuclear military forces without reducing conventional deterrence or warfighting effectiveness.

Because the United States ignored Europe during the Vietnam years, supporters of NATO have a good case when they argue that it is time to correct some of the alliance's glaring military weaknesses and to modernize some of its weaponry. But both conservatives and, to a lesser extent, the Carter administration have invoked an exaggerated specter of the Soviet threat in Europe, and they have used this specter to justify accelerated production of costly and sometimes unneeded weapons systems. They have done so even though a close analysis of the balance of military power in Europe shows that NATO could today readily defend itself with conventional forces against a Warsaw Pact attack. If Congress accepts this exaggerated view, American taxpayers will be saddled with new burdens, détente will be threatened, and the arms race in Europe will speed dangerously ahead. □

Budget requests for NATO far exceed what can be justified by calm analysis.

cessively centralized. There are some weapons shortages as well, particularly in antitank weapons, heavy artillery, and ammunition.

The Carter administration is addressing these problems; in the past few years, in fact, the United States has been making substantial improvements in these weak areas. The ratio between combat and support troops has been increased; this has permitted the United States to create two new combat brigades, one of which has been deployed in the northern part of West Germany. Airfield sheltering is now almost complete. Arrangements are pending that would centralize NATO military communications. To avoid the possible delay in airlifting heavy equipment such as tanks from the United States to Europe upon warning of Pact mobilization, the U.S. Army is presently testing the idea of adding special antitank battalions—which can be flown to battle more easily—to reserve forces with a very high degree of readiness. The stockpile of artillery ammunition is being increased. Belgium has recently added four antitank brigades to its two divisions in Germany. Airfields throughout Western Europe can now fuel and supply aircraft from virtually all the NATO countries. Prepositioned stocks have been low primarily because supplies were taken from them to reinforce Israeli forces during the 1973 war; they are now virtually back up to pre-war levels.

Carter and Harold Brown are continuing and, in some cases, accelerating programs started by the Ford adminis-

C-5A, to airlift everything to Europe. Carter and Brown are also continuing to harden and disperse air bases.

HOWEVER, IN A NUMBER of his budget requests this year, Brown has far exceeded what can be justified by a calm analysis of the military balance in Europe. Currently, within ten days, the United States can augment its five and two-thirds divisions and 28 tactical air squadrons in Europe by an extra division and 40 squadrons. By 1983, Brown wants to be able to add five divisions and 60 tactical air squadrons in the same time period. Not only is this excessive—unless one accepts a host of misleading claims about Soviet military capability—it could appear provocative to Soviet military planners, thus increasing tension in the region.

Over the next few years, Brown also wants more than 700 XM-1 tanks (totaling \$1.3 billion), 1388 F-16 air-superiority aircraft (\$11 million each), 729 F-15 air-superiority fighters (\$18 million each), 733 A-10 anti-armor combat planes (\$5.7 million each), 521 F-14 naval air fighters (\$24 million apiece), and more. In fiscal 1979, Brown wants to spend almost \$24 billion on major army, air force, and naval air weapons procurement and modernization programs alone.

Much of this is unnecessary. The luxurious gold-plated XM-1 is not at all cost-effective on the battlefield compared with other weapons, including the presently deployed M-60 tank (upon which Brown wants, in any event, to

PERJURY: The Hiss-Chambers Case, by Allen Weinstein.
Alfred A. Knopf, 674 pp., \$15.00.

Unanswered questions

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“WE KNOW THAT SINCE Yalta the leaders of this Government by design or ignorance have continued to betray us. . . . We also know that the same men who betrayed America are still leading America. The traitors must no longer lead the betrayed.” Thus, Senator Joseph McCarthy, exploiting the popular identification of the recently convicted Alger Hiss as “the architect of Yalta,” neatly summarized his favorite theme. It was a theme that, in varying forms, conservatives and liberals built on during the 1950s and 1960s, in order to attain personal political influence, to justify stringent restrictions on civil liberties, and to legitimize an indiscriminate antiradicalism. Only after the Watergate and Church Committee revelations discredited this McCarthyite politics, by increasing public sensitivity to abuses of power and the fragility of civil liberties, would the troubling questions surrounding Alger Hiss’s trial and conviction once again command the interest of the wider public. Another indirect result of the Watergate affair ensured that the pretext of “national security” would no longer preclude the release of the files of the federal intelligence agencies. Allen Weinstein’s *Perjury* is the product of this altered political context.

Perjury is not a dispassionate book. Other historians, reading the same evidence, will undoubtedly differ with

Weinstein’s conclusion—that Alger Hiss committed perjury when he denied having given classified State Department documents to Whittaker Chambers during the 1930s. Just as likely, none of these conflicting interpretations will command the attention that has been lavished on Weinstein’s study. For that reason, *Perjury*’s conclusions about the troubling questions involving the Hiss-Chambers case, as well as the thoroughness of the research underlying the book, must be seriously and carefully assessed.

What are these questions? Among those Weinstein might have addressed himself to are: How can we be certain that when Chambers radically reversed himself, both in his dating of his own defection from the Communist Party and in his charges against Hiss, he was finally telling the truth? Do we now have all of the significant facts on the roles that the FBI and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) played in this case, and on the nature of the relationship between the bureau and HUAC? And, What precisely is comprehended in the term “espionage,” as used against Hiss by Chambers and Weinstein? No attempt will or can be made here to provide answers to these questions; the aim is only to suggest that, contrary to the judgment expressed by a number of others who have reviewed *Perjury*, it is not the definitive work or the last word on the subject.

On five separate occasions Chambers claimed that he had defected from



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